



Roger Casement Branch

of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hEireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

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Honorary Branch President: James Nolan

Branch Annual Christmas Lunch 2017.

The Annual Christmas Lunch was held in the West County Hotel, Chapelizod on December 7th. In excess of 100 members and guests were in attendance. Guest of Honour was Brig-General Sean Clancy who attended the function for the first time. A good time was had by all.

Air Corps GOC Brig-Gen Sean Clancy
attended the Branch Annual
Christmas Lunch.



Secretary's Report

The Roger Casement Branch had a very busy year in 2017. Branch Meetings were held every month and were well attended. The Branch now has 119 paid-up members.

The Branch was delighted to be awarded the O.N.E. Branch of the Year for the second time. Communications with the members continued through the Link newsletter, our Email system, Social Media and through the website.

The Branch continues to promote the work of the O.N.E. and took part in many fund raising events. Throughout the year, Branch members attended Annual Masses, Commemoration Ceremonies and a wide variety of social events across Ireland and abroad. In excess of 30 functions were attended which included O.N.E. Branch Masses in Cathal Brugha Bks, McKee Bks, Athy, Dublin Airport Fire Service. Members also participated in WW1 Memorial Services in Flanders and in Dublin and Ennis. The Branch also participated in functions arranged by IUNVA and RAAFA.

We look forward to another active and successful year in 2018.

Noel Murphy

Editors Note

We have had a number of requests through social media to provide an article on the Airchords Showband which was made up of serving Air Corps Members during the Showband era in Ireland. The included article provides some details of the personnel involved. We hope to provide details of the visits of Brendan Bowyer and the Royal Showband to Baldonnel in a later issue.

Members are advised that a new index has been added to the Branch's website which shows the contents of each of the Link Newsletters which have been published since 2007 and which can be viewed on the website. This will make searching for specific articles more easy. Simply browse the index and then select the article for viewing.

We suggest that all former and current members should browse the Branch website and you will be surprised with the volume of Air Corps History and of former personnel that is recorded in the Link section.

WWW.ROGER CASEMENT BRANCH

Edition sponsored by a member of
the 1959 Apprentice Class



The Air Chords Show Band

The Show-Band era swept through Ireland during the late fifties and into the late sixties. Dance Halls sprung up all over the country and festivals with marquee dancing were held in nearly every country village. In response to the need for live music it is estimated that approximately 3,000 show-bands emerged during this period.

During the height of the Show Band era in 1959, a number of amateur musicians who were all members of the Air Corps based in Baldonnell started to play together to pass away the long evenings.

The original group included, Paddy O'Meara (TTS Instructor) Myles Mooney (Ftr Sqdn.), Sean Kinsella (Engine Shop), Arthur O'Neill (Medic), Ernie Berkenheier (Signals), Archie Raeside (Drawing Office). Eventually a number of tunes were put together and the new band launched itself by playing their party pieces at some concerts in the Dublin area. A vocalist was needed so Mick McNamara another Air Corps member was drafted in. Mick however did not continue after the initial weeks of practise.

Paddy, a native of Waterford was a clarinet player with a particular interest in traditional jazz which was quite popular at the time. He was well acquainted with members of the Royal Showband having attended school with some of its members. Paddy opted to play the Tenor Sax in the Air Chords and doubled on the Trombone.

Arthur, a native of Dublin was attached to the Army Medical Corps based in Baldonnell. He was a very talented clarinet player and opted to play the Alto Sax in addition to clarinet in the band.

Myles also from Dublin was the guitar player and a good vocalist.

Archie a native of Dublin was employed in the Air Corps Drawing Office and was a trumpet player. (He became the first Air Corps member to serve with the U.N.).

Ernie, born in Germany was a member of the Air Signals Corps and was a Bass Guitarist. His knowledge of electrics was a great asset to the band in setting up amplification equipment etc.

Sean, a native of Enniscorthy was coerced into becoming the drummer. He was very popular particularly with his Fats Domino impressions.

During the summer and autumn we continued to expand our repertoire of current pop and country songs with a smattering of popular jazz numbers. Vocals were performed by Myles with back-up from Ernie (Jim Reeves numbers) and Seanie.

We were ready to try the dance scene so another Air Corps member Norbert O'Reilly better known as Nobby was appointed manager. Amplification gear was rented as required and an entrepreneurial

Air Corps member James McEntee bought a Volkswagen Van and provided the transport. We were ready to go by Christmas 1959. Nobby marketed the band as the Air Chords Showband, Monaghan believing that country bands would have easier access to dance halls around Dublin and beyond. Having made our debut in Clondalkin, Newcastle, Lucan, and several other Co Dublin halls including the Top Hat Dunlaoighre and of course the Gymnasium, Baldonnell, we were faced with our first change of personnel when Archie was assigned to travel as a photographer with the first Irish Battalion to serve in the Congo in 1960.

Archie was replaced as trumpet player by another Air Corps member Don Kinsella. Don also shared with the vocals. Later in 1960 Myles who was the principal vocalist and guitarist was also assigned to the Congo as part of the Air Corps Pipe Band.

Myles was replaced by two 'Civvy' members. Joe Fitzmaurice as vocalist and Liam Hurley as lead guitarist and vocalist (Liam was later well known in musical circles and is a brother of Red Hurley)

The band now consisted of seven members.

Paddy (continued as leader) Arthur, Sean, Ernie, Don, Joe and Liam.



The band continued in this configuration playing every weekend in the Dublin area and also in Northern Ireland with occasional bookings in the Dublin/Kildare area during the midweek nights.

Archie did not return to the band on his return from the Congo in 1961 but Myles re-joined and Liam departed. During this reorganisation Nobby stepped down as Manager to be replaced by Don Kinsella. Don was replaced in the band by Trumpeter Phil O'Reilly who at the time was a member of the Garda Band. An additional Air Corps member Pat (Scotty) Kane was added as Baritone Sax player. Scotty was very good at performing the comedy numbers which were then very popular. The band continued in popularity playing extensively in the 'North' and in regular Dublin venues and played as support band to several big names including Jim Reeves and Frank Ifield.

Scotty dropped out in 1962 and the remaining members, Paddy, Arthur, Sean, Ernie. Phil. Myles and Joe continued until the spring of 1963 when a major decision was needed.

Paddy recalls playing 19 nights out of 21 and a decision had to be made about the band turning professional. Paddy decided to drop out to continue his Aviation career and was replaced. Myles, Ernie, Sean and Arthur resigned from the PDF and the band continued on a professional basis with additional members.

The Band continued for many more years with some changes of personnel notably when Pat Lynch joined the band as vocalist. The band was better known at that time as Pat Lynch and the AirChords. When the Showband scene eventually came to an end in the late sixties, Seanie was the only original member still playing with the band.



Back: Ernie Berkenheier, Don Kinsella, Liam Hurley
Front: Joe Fitzgerald, Arthur O'Neill, Paddy O'Meara,
Scotty Kane, Sean Kinsella

The Air Chords Show Band (continued . . .)

Myles emigrated to Australia where he had a successful career in the Sydney area playing in the Bar and cabaret circuit. Ernie re-joined the Army and resumed his career in the Air Signals Corps, he sadly passed away in 2004. Arthur continued to play for many years in the Irish cabaret scene, living in Co.Kildare. Sean now living in Cork is still an active musician.

Archie is living in Mountrath and has written several books which include his military experiences in the Congo. Scotty Kane and Don Kinsella are both retired from Aer Lingus. Paddy left the Air Corps in 1969 and continued his career in Aviation, working in the aircraft leasing sector and for a period in the airline sector and is a former Chairman and presently vice Chairman of the Roger Casement (Air Corps) Branch of O.N.E..



Picture taken Mayfair Ballroom Clondalkin. 1961

L-R: Ernie Berkenheier (Bass Guitar); Sean Kinsella (Drums); Joe Fitzmaurice (Vocals); Arthur O'Neill (Alto Sax/ Clar); Paddy O'Meara (Tenor Sax/Trmb) Myles Mooney (Guitar) Don Kinsella (Trumpet).

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Sgt. Hugh Gaynor Remembered

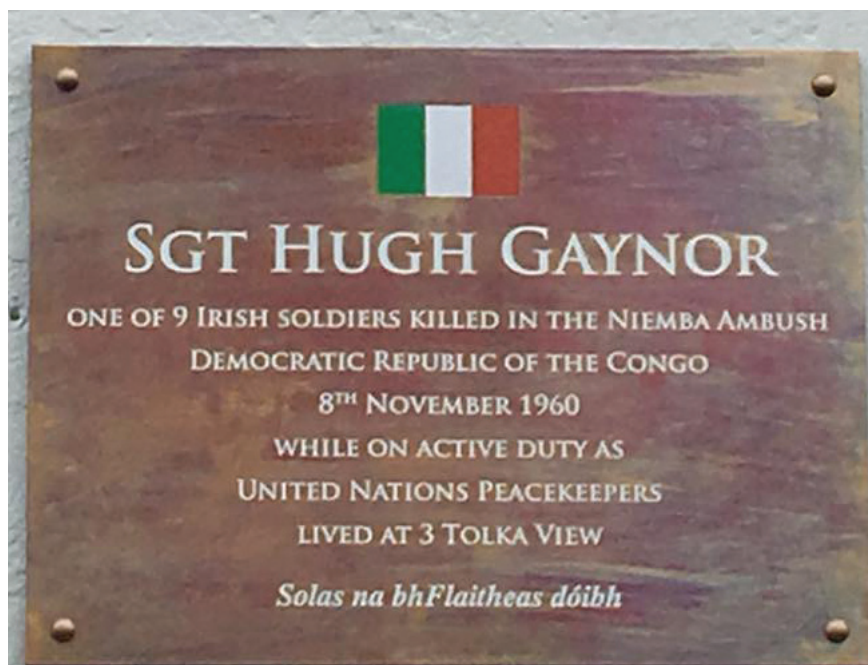
A plaque unveiling ceremony was recently held in Blanchardstown to honour one of its local residents, Sgt. Hugh "Sonny" Gaynor, who was tragically killed along with eight of his fellow Irish Army Colleagues in the Niemba Ambush in the former Belgian Congo back in 1960. Friend and neighbour, Comdt, Frank Russell (Irish Air Corps-Retd.), was instrumental in the initiative to honour this brave soldier. Many family, friends, comrades together with former and current Defence Force members, as well as locals attended. A number of Roger Casement Branch members were also in attendance. A surviving member of the ambush, Tom Kenny, recited a moving poem which he had written. Sgt. Gaynor departed Baldonnel with the 33rd Battalion in summer 1960. The Niemba Ambush occurred on November 9th, 1960 and is well documented in Archie Raeside's historic book *The Congo-1960 'The First Irish United Nations Peacekeepers'*.



*RCB members attended the ceremony :
L-R Peter McGlynn, Frank Donnelly, Noel Murphy, P.J.Brennan*



Comdt. Frank Russell (Retd.)



CUIMHNIMIS ~ Let us remember those who have died. ~

JOSEPH WALSH
PETER FINN
JOHN CAPLIS
GERRY RYAN

MATT HANLEY
ENDA P. SMYTH
BILL O'REGAN

J.F.DOWNEY
MICHAEL FITZGERALD
JACK LAMBE

MICHAEL O'BRIEN
DAVID O'SULLIVAN
C. CREIGHTON

Air Corps News

Here is a snapshot of the last two weeks (Feb 2018) for [Air Corps 112](#).

Over the course of the last fortnight we have responded on 23 missions, and rendered critical aid across 12 counties in all 4 provinces.

These missions included the transport of an on-duty paramedic of the National Ambulance Service (NAS), as well as the very first AC112 transport of a patient on to Altnagelvin Hospital, in Derry. The use of hospitals in Northern Ireland is an important step forward for the service, further improving our ability to provide life - saving care in the minimal time frame to anyone in the country.



Air Corps crew of the AW139 Helicopter with the medics.

Today was a very special day for the Irish Air Corps as it welcomed 5 new members to the Officer Corps during a commissioning ceremony at Casement Airbase.

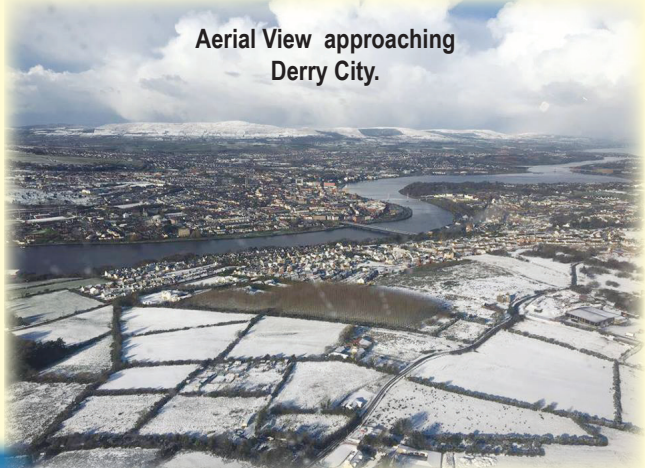
Captain Geraldine Browne, Lt Warren Downey, Lt Jamie Brady and Lt Robert Keane have served for many years as NCO Air Traffic Controllers in #5 Support Wing. Having received their Presidential Commissions today they will continue to lead our ATC Squadron in delivering its vital services for years to come.

2/Lt Robert Quirke received his Presidential Commission in addition to his Military Pilot's Wings having successfully completed his Wings Course.

We will shortly announce details of the upcoming Air Corps Cadet Competition. If you would like to follow in his footsteps, stay following on Facebook.

Congratulations to all involved today and thank you to the families and friends who have supported you along the way.

Aerial View approaching Derry City.



Newly commissioned officers with the GOC Air Corps following the ceremony in Casement Aerodrome on February 19th, 2018.

L-R :

Brig-Gen Sean Clancy, 2nd Lt Quirke, Capt. Browne, Lt. Brady, Lt. Keane. Lt. Downey.